

PORTRAITS OF PARTNERSHIP

Common Vision
Shared Values
Joint Action



U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

Letter from the Ambassador



The United States celebrates February as Black History Month, to recognize the many important contributions that African-Americans have made to our country. As our first African-American President began his term of office, we were proud to share with our Bulgarian friends a variety of activities to mark the occasion. Gospel singer Janice Harrington electrified audiences, giving a standing-room only concert in Bulgaria Hall and holding several workshops with aspiring singers.

February 12 was also the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, and to commemorate the legacy of one of our greatest presidents, we launched the Bulgarian publication of *Abraham Lincoln: My Idea of Democracy* at the American Corner. President Lincoln's ideas resonate deeply in a world still troubled by inequalities and political instability.

Unfortunately, the month also saw continued economic difficulty, with the effects of the global financial downturn being felt more notably in the region. It is clear we have challenging times ahead of us. President Obama and his team are working closely with their counterparts in Europe and elsewhere to coordinate the necessary steps to turn around our economies.

We have important tools at our disposal and intend to use them for best effect. For example, the U.S. Trade Development Agency recently granted nearly USD 400,000 to the Bulgarian government to help improve its information and communications technology to become more transparent and efficient. Similarly, the Office of the Development Counselor is crafting a public/private partnership to enhance Bulgaria's competitiveness in the IT sector – working with the Bulgarian government, private business, universities, and charitable foundations to stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation, and build human capital in this sector.

As the global economy struggles through the current crisis, we need to invest more, not less, in fostering new ideas and putting them into action. I look forward to working together to make this happen.

Visit the Ambassador's [video profile](#) to learn more.

Visit the Ambassador's [page](#).

New!! Visit us on [YouTube!](#)



In the News



U.S. Supports Bulgarian Technology Development

Ambassador McElDowney and Plamen Vachkov, Chairman of the State Information Technologies and Communications Agency, signed a grant agreement of nearly USD 400,000 on February 5. The grant, provided to the Bulgarian government by the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, will improve the government's information and communications technologies by including new technology and innovations. Addressing the audience after the signing ceremony, Ambassador McElDowney said the grant will enable the Bulgarian government to become more transparent and efficient and is another example of the U.S. government's commitment to help Bulgaria develop its infrastructure and institutional capacity.

Deputy Chief of Mission Karagiannis Visits Veliko Turnovo

Deputy Chief of Mission Alexander Karagiannis visited Veliko Turnovo on February 10 to discuss the Bulgaria-U.S. partnership at a public information forum in the Veliko Turnovo city hall. In his remarks, he noted the history of successful cooperation between the U.S. and Bulgarian militaries and the prospect for even greater successes in the future. Following the forum, he visited the American College Arcus to speak with students about the importance of being involved in the community as well as opportunities for future study in the United States.



Development Counselor Denny Robertson Praises Efforts to Combat Trafficking

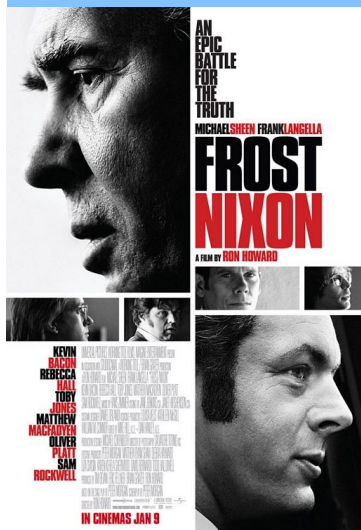
The U.S. Embassy's first Development Counselor to Bulgaria, Denny Robertson, took part in the official launch of the International Organization for Migration's new public awareness campaign to fight labor trafficking and exploitation, funded by the Bulgaria Fund. Mr. Robertson acknowledged the broad importance that the U.S. government places on the issue of trafficking and recognized the efforts made by the Government of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian community to combat this type of crime.

USAID Supports Bulgaria's New Role as a Donor Country

As a new donor country, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened an inter-ministerial task force for USAID-supported training on February 23-24 to discuss strategic and legal frameworks necessary to deliver development assistance. The coordinating inter-ministerial task force included representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Economy & Energy, Defense, and selected non-governmental organizations.



In the News



An Oscar-Nominated Film in Sofia's *Cinema House*

On February 3, Ambassador McEldowney opened the Sofia premiere of *Frost/Nixon* at the historic Cinema House in the city center. Speaking to a crowd of over 120 journalists, civil society activists, political leaders, and students, she highlighted the universal themes of the film: the need in a democracy to be ever vigilant against corruption, and the important role of journalists as watchdogs.



Sofia Celebrates Lincoln's 200th Birthday with a Book Launch at the American Corner

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's birth and Black History Month, the American Corner in Sofia held a book launch for *Abraham Lincoln: My Idea of Democracy* on February 12. During her presentation of the book, Ambassador McEldowney noted that this is the first book published in Bulgarian presenting the thoughts and words of President Lincoln. The book contains excerpts from letters and speeches by Abraham Lincoln and was published by Stigmati Publishing House with funds from the U.S. Embassy Book Program. More than 60 guests attended the program, including professors, writers, publishers, politicians, and members of civil rights groups. Former Bulgarian Ambassador and poet Edwin Sougarev presented his reflections on Lincoln and what the President continues to mean to the world.

Remarks by Edwin Sugarev, Editor-in-Chief of *Literatouren Vestnik* (PDF 2.04MB)



Post Speaker Program Allows Embassy Family Member to Share Shakespeare with Bulgarians

On February 17, Brian Hall visited the 134th High School in Sofia (commonly known as the Jewish School) to speak with students in the 11th grade about Shakespeare. Hall is the spouse of Cultural Affairs Officer Sherry Keneson-Hall and was participating in the Embassy speaker program, which is open to American employees and their dependents. The program allows Americans to speak to Bulgarians on a variety of topics. This visit helped maintain what is an already established good relationship with one of the capital's elite high schools. Both students and school administration welcome the opportunity to exchange views and ideas with U.S. diplomats and other Americans.

Janice Harrington Makes Sofia Sing

The Lady of American Gospel, Blues, and Jazz, Janice Harrington, and her guitarist Dylan Vaughn, left Sofia in high fashion after their standing room only concert Saturday, February 7 in the Chamber Hall of Bulgaria Hall. The concert was a roaring success with the crowd of nearly 300 spilling out into the lobby and singing along to songs such as "Oh Happy Day" and "What a Wonderful World." Harrington and Vaughn gave interviews to Jazz FM radio, the *Panorama* television show on Bulgarian National Television, and taped an episode of the late night talk show *Night Birds*. While in Sofia, Harrington and Vaughn conducted workshops for students at the National Music Academy and the National Music High School in honor of Black History Month, explaining the history behind African-American music from slavery through the civil rights movement.



In the Spotlight



Celebrating Colors for Valentine's Day at the English Language School in Plovdiv

Varvara Kountouzi, a Teaching Assistant and a Fulbright Alum, is currently teaching English at the English Language School in Plovdiv. This year, the students organized a St. Valentine's class and dressed in pink and red to celebrate the holiday together with their teacher.

A Team Supporting Wise Decisions



The city of Razgrad is currently the home of the Peace Corps Volunteer **Christopher Ellis**, who is teaching at the *Shandor Petyofi* school. Christopher and his counterparts from the town started the "Wise Decisions Club" project with the aim of facilitating education and open discussion relating to sexual health and HIV/AIDS awareness, non-violence, saying "no" to drugs and good self-esteem. The enthusiastic team works with eighth and ninth graders and meets twice a month. They also helped the Red Cross hand out informational flyers and condoms in the city center on World AIDS Day.

The Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange is pleased to announce the 2010-2011 competition for:

- ♦ Fulbright Senior Scholar Grants – 3-5 months for research and lecturing
 - ♦ Fulbright Graduate Study Grants – up to 10 months for non-degree Masters' and Ph.D.) programs
 - ♦ International Fulbright Science and Technology Ph.D. Awards – 5 years for doctoral programs
 - ♦ Fulbright – University of Oklahoma Grant – 2 years for an MBA program
 - ♦ Fulbright - *Thanks to Scandinavia* Institute Grant – 10 months for a Master's program
 - ♦ Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowships – 10 months for mid-career professional development
 - ♦ Research Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society – 3-5 months for research and study
- University professors, researchers, university graduates and mid-career professionals are invited to compete for the respective programs.*
All candidates will be considered without regard to race, color, religion, and sex.

Deadline for Fulbright and Hubert Humphrey Grants: September 7, 2009

Deadline for Science and Technology Ph.D Awards: May 30, 2009

More information can be obtained at <http://www.fulbright.bg> and at the Bulgarian-American Fulbright Commission.

Upcoming events

March 5-15: "The Jim Jarmusch Retrospective," with the sponsorship of the Public Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy, Sofia International Film Festival will show a number of American Independent Films.

March 10: Webchat with Consul General Dan Perrone.

March 18: The U.S. Embassy will host a DVC on David Vise's book "The Google Story," published with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Sofia.

Please Note:

March 2-3: the U.S. Embassy will be closed in observation of March 3, Bulgarian National Holiday.

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